

## **Peregrine Falcon Flight Week – San Jose City Hall**

**What to expect prior to fledging:** On June 8<sup>th</sup>, City Hall's falcons will be 42 days old. Peregrine falcons fledge, or fly for the first time, at 41-43 days of age. To prepare for flight, they will begin to flap their wings vigorously. They will get up on the short wall along the edge of the ledge where their nest is and pump their wings. Their bodies are full grown so they are now trying to gain strength. Wing and tail feathers are growing in at the rate of about 3/8 inch per day. They actually fledge before their feathers are fully-grown. Fledging is often accidental. They leave the ground while pumping their wings and a gust of air will carry them away from the building and they find themselves in flight. This is fine and completely normal.

**Fledging:** When they find themselves in flight, they often begin thinking immediately about where and how to land. Their large feet (for catching prey) are not yet well coordinated so landing is a clumsy event. Once safely landed, they will often stay in the same spot for hours and very likely overnight. They have no need to return to the nest ledge; in fact, it is unlikely that they will ever return. They do not think of returning "home" as we do but instead want to follow or join their parents. Young peregrines have a very annoying vocalization that attracts the attention of the parents. The parents will deliver food to the young wherever they are. The youngsters use their extraordinary vision to spot a parent in the air and immediately begin vocalizing while flapping their wings to attract the parent to them.

City Hall is particularly well suited for fledging peregrines because it has ledges over the windows at every floor, and abundant balconies and other structures for the youngsters to land on. The building also dominates the landscape making it likely that a landing away from the building will end on a rooftop where the parent birds can attend to them. This does not mean that we have a guarantee that everything will work out perfectly. Peregrines at wilderness sites are killed each year in any number of tragic ways including injuries due to bad landings, and being eaten by other predators like owls, eagles, bobcats and coyotes. Urban nest sites spare the peregrines most of these threats but present new ones. Interested members of the

public will want to be attentive for fledglings that may end up on the ground due to a bad landing from a higher perch.

**Bird Rescue:** Please do not touch or try to rescue the fledglings. Staff from the Santa Cruz Predatory Bird Research Group (SCPBRG) will be on-site and one of their responsibilities will be primarily to replace the birds to a high perch.

Staff from SCPBRG will not attempt to capture a fledgling unless it is on the ground or in some imminent danger. A falcon that is on any ledge off the ground is not in imminent danger. **City employees should not attempt to "rescue" fledglings that appear to be "abandoned"** on a building ledge. So long as the parent birds can reach them they will be fine. Rapid feather growth will make young birds more competent in flight as each day passes so that a bird that looks forlorn and abandoned one day may dominate the sky a day or so later. **If you spot one of our young falcon fledglings on the ground, please contact City Hall Security at 535-1286. Do not touch or attempt to rescue the bird.**